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THE  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF THE  
I OR EGO

CHARLES K. WHEELER



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HUNDREDTH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY.

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THE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF THE

I OR EGO.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF THE  
I OR EGO;  
OR,  
THE METAPHYSICS  
OF AN INTERLOPER AND IMPOSTOR,  
HIMSELF IN THE ROLE OF  
CONFESSOR.

---

BY CHARLES KIRKLAND WHEELER.

---

“Art thou not thyself, perchance,  
But the universe in trance?  
A reflection inly flung  
By that world thou fanciest sprung  
From thyself—thyself a dream—  
Of the world’s thinking thou the theme?”

---

BOSTON :  
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.  
9 PARK SQUARE.  
1903.

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## PREFACE.

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THE present work is in effect a dissertation to show that the ego, as referring to the subject as distinguished from the object, is not, which is to say that I am not, that you the reader are not self-conscious, nor even conscious, yet that we are so sure that we are; that only the thinker—which is not you nor I—is conscious, and not even he (or it) is self-conscious; to show, in a word, that, that we are conscious and self-conscious is all illusion and even all delusion, except as we reason ourselves into a knowledge of the illusion as only the illusion that it is.



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**MY AWARENESS OF MYSELF.**





## MY AWARENESS OF MYSELF.

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I WAS first aware of myself—aware of myself as it would seem—on the occasion of my seeing myself, as it were by reflection in a mirror. If I were, verily, what is implied as there is thinking, namely, a thinker, there would be neither imposture nor impostor. But it is that I am not that thinker, and yet—deceiving myself as well as others—pose as being what I am not, that there are the imposition and I myself, the impostor, and very, withal, a colossal one. But, assuming for convenience, that I am what I pose as being—the thinker; assuming this to the end of the exposition of the very imposture and impostor I have in mind to lay bare, and I repeat that I was first aware of myself *as* myself on seeing, as by reflection in a mirror,

myself as object. Not that seeing, as by reflection in a mirror, myself as object was the equivalent of my being aware of myself as myself, or that it was the cause of the event—for it was neither. As I discovered later, the former is but a step of psychical advance, (or retrogression) of which advance, being aware of myself as myself is another and coincident one. Not, I say, that the thus seeing myself was the equivalent of being aware of myself as myself, but only that it was the occasion or concomitant of that event. Just how the one step should yet appear to follow, or be taken simultaneously with the other; or, just how the something *looking in* the mirror should realize identity with that *seen* on looking in, that looking in being assumed to have no knowledge of itself as itself *until* it looked in, was not, at first blush, apparent. Indeed, on a little scrutiny, it was found to be absolutely unthinkable that, *from* as it were my reflection as in a mirror, should come consciousness of it as *my* reflection. It was impossible to think it; and only possible to think of

or about it—which was all anybody did, whatever the pretension or affectation of doing more. Or, if was possible more, it was only as it was to be positively thought absolutely impossible, as well as unthinkable, and unthinkable because impossible. Impossible and unthinkable, for there could be no recognition of object as subject except by comparison—comparison of what is known of subject as subject with what is recognized as object; and how this comparison but as there was *already* consciousness of self and of self as self, and the implied knowledge of self with which to make the comparison?—which would be to say that, in order to the end of self-consciousness, there must first be some self-consciousness; first must be some self-consciousness for there to be self-consciousness at all!—contradiction and absurdity enough. For, certainly, I say, there could be recognition of object as being the subject only by this comparison; since, how should I know my features in the glass as mine but as I knew something of my features, and knew of them as mine before, and

recognize those in the glass as mine by comparison and the resemblance?—how, but in this way, save, at least, as, perhaps, I might know them by a sort of direct intuition as mine, when, of course, *it would not be knowing them as due as it were to reflection as in a mirror*: and that I should know them as by intuition is doubtful, to say the least of it.

Just how, then, I became aware of my reflection as *my* reflection, I could make no certain headway in divining. I should have to, at least, no longer imagine that myself as object as by reflection in a glass, imagine that perceiver deployed as the perceived, was either equivalent, cause, or means to that end.

But should I, as I might contemplate it as but the occasion or coincidence of my being aware of myself as myself, and contemplate the two—my reflection as in a mirror, and my being aware of myself as myself—as but coincidents, perhaps correlatives, of each other and together, a stage in common in the development of consciousness out of a

previous stage, that previous stage one simply of perceiving and perceived, and one in which there is, as yet, neither subject nor object as such,—should I, as I might contemplate the two thus as an identical stage in the development of consciousness; and contemplate, moreover, the development from the previous stage to this identical one as the result of reaction of the individual with environment, as with all development is the case;—should I, I say, as I did this, even then, solve the mystery to a certainty? Again, is there, at least, doubt in the matter?

Is there, then, no way out of the uncertainty of solution? Is there, indeed, any way out but as it might be demonstrated that the I or ego is not self-conscious—not conscious of self as self—nor, indeed, even conscious?—demonstrated that I myself, the writer, am not, that you yourself, the reader are not, much as we so airily and confidently are wont to think we are?—that we are not, even though so ridiculous as may seem the proposition that we are not? And is there, in fact, even this way out? May it, indeed,

be true that we are not self-conscious, nor even so much as conscious, as would appear? Let us see.

THE ILLUSION  
OF MY BEING SELF-CONSCIOUS  
OR EVEN CONSCIOUS.





THE ILLUSION  
OF MY BEING SELF-CONSCIOUS  
OR EVEN CONSCIOUS.

THEOREM 1.

---

HERE, to begin with, is this theorem, one demonstrable, the theorem, to wit, *that the self-consciousness—self-consciousness as such (consciousness of self as self)—of the conscious self, the self something distinct from consciousness and back of it, but as having consciousness or being conscious, is not only utterly unthinkable, but absolutely impossible.*

And here, following, is the demonstration:

Thus, it is, of course, only self-evident that there can be no self-consciousness of a thing not, itself, conscious. But, if there can be no self-consciousness of a thing not, itself, conscious, or until it is conscious, then, *once* it is conscious, there can be no self-consciousness but of what was in the *consciousness* of the thing simply conscious. And, as what

was in the consciousness of the latter or the conscious self, the self not consciousness itself, yet, however, that something having consciousness or being conscious, was nothing of consciousness of that self (or it would be *already* self-conscious) nothing of that self even, much less of that self as such, then in the any self-consciousness as of such conscious self, there could be nothing either of consciousness of that self as such, nor even, indeed, of what was that self merely. That is, the self as something distinct from consciousness, *not being in the consciousness of the conscious self, would be utterly beyond the reach of any act of self-consciousness.* So, that the self-consciousness as such of the self of the conscious self, the self as something distinct from consciousness but as having consciousness or being conscious, is demonstrably, and here demonstrated, an absolute impossibility; and only the self-consciousness as such, of consciousness with its content other than self as distinct from consciousness itself, is possible, even if, indeed, that, even that be possible.

To state it again, that it, without failure, be seen that there is no escape from this,—to state it again and thus:—Assume the self as something distinct from consciousness. If that self be not conscious, it will be allowed only self-evident that it could not be *self-conscious*. Assume it, then, yet that not consciousness itself, still as having consciousness or being conscious; then the *consciousness* of such conscious self could have nothing in it of *consciousness of such self*—otherwise, it would be *already* self-conscious. However, once ever anything like the self-consciousness of such conscious self obtained then that self-consciousness could only be a *consciousness, itself, too*, having nothing in it of the consciousness of such self,—otherwise, again, it would be *something more* than the conscious self as unconscious of itself that was self-conscious—something more which has *no being*; and how could what has no being be conscious of itself or self-conscious? Such, being a self-evident impossibility and absurdity—amounts to a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole proposition alto-

gether of the self-consciousness of the self of the conscious self, the self something distinct from consciousness.

To state it, even once again,—and that it is so contrary to the prevailing view must be my excuse for doing so,—the self-consciousness of a thing is the consciousness of *of just what is that thing*; and just *what* is that thing of *the conscious self*, the self as distinct from consciousness, and back of it *is thing without consciousness of such self*; and so, a *self-consciousness* of that thing without any consciousness of such self would be only a consciousness of that thing *without any consciousness of such self, again*. It would be a consciousness, as it would seem, of *some* self, of course, or there would be no self-consciousness, as it would appear to be, at all; a consciousness of *some* self, but of *what* self, or of the self as *what?*—is the query.

Self-consciousness must be either a mere mental attitude, the self but an abstraction, or it must be a consciousness of a self, an independent existence, or entity which, conscious, is conscious of itself,—and which is

it? At least, if the former, there is even no such thing, really, as the self, conscious, whoever or whatever the abstraction. But of this later.

What has thus far been discovered and demonstrated is to the effect of what the self, under the circumstances, is *not*; and that, certainly, it is *not* anything whatsoever at once back of and distinct from consciousness.

And over all, let it be *remembered*—that if the foregoing and primary proposition that a self—conscious—as distinct from consciousness is incapable of self-consciousness is not true, then there is no such thing as a conscious being that is not at the same time self-conscious; no such thing as a conscious oyster or animalcule that is not as surely self-conscious as are you or I.

But now, then, anything whatsoever, to come into consciousness as an I or ego, can only do so as something self-conscious—self-conscious as such; can only do so as something aware of itself, and aware of itself as the self it is; *which*—thus self-conscious and

aware of itself as the thing it is—we have just seen that at least a *self* as at once distinct from, and back of, consciousness never can be; and so can never come into consciousness as an *I* or *ego*. I say self-consciousness as such; for self-consciousness simply, consciousness simply of *what* is self is not consciousness of self *as* self; and there can be no consciousness of the *I* or *ego* but as there is consciousness of self as such.

But, again, if such self can never come into consciousness as an *I* or *ego*, then, the *I* or *ego* with which we are familiar cannot by any possibility be the any *I* or *ego* as representing such self; that is, any *I* or *ego* with which we are familiar cannot possibly refer to anything at once back of consciousness and distinct from it; and can, at most, refer only to consciousness itself, or to something front of it as it were, as might be entertained, much such a thing, its content.

In other words, the self-consciousness of such self impossible, the any *I* or *ego* as self-conscious and referring to it is impossible; and the any *I* or *ego* as self-conscious and

referring to it impossible, the I or ego with which we are familiar and which is itself—as would appear at least—self-conscious, cannot possibly refer to such, cannot refer to an I or ego the self-consciousness of which is impossible.

Should it be said to all this that it is only saying that we, with mind such as is ours, can “know only mind”; or, perhaps, that, anyway, any mind whatever can know only mind; I reply that it is saying nothing of the kind. It is only saying that nothing short of consciousness can be conscious of itself, and that, as only nothing short of such can be, only with nothing short of such, itself, can any I or ego be supposed identified, or, to which be supposed to refer. Consciousness may be conscious of countless things besides itself; and in what has been said, has not been affirmed even that it may not be of matter, if that were back of it. But it has only been said that, itself, whatsoever to be self-conscious must be consciousness itself, or at least, nothing back of it—not even mind back of it, as back of it might be supposed unconscious mind.





# WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?



## WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?

### THEOREM 2.

But now, again, if the self and I, or ego, cannot be identified with anything at once back of and distinct from consciousness, can it be even with consciousness itself?

And this brings me to my second theorem, to wit: *That consciousness cannot be conscious of itself, and, so, not self-conscious; that there is no such thing as the self-consciousness of consciousness.* Or, to state it again, *that the self in any mental attitude of self-consciousness is but an abstraction, and, so, nothing itself conscious, and so, again, not anything that might be self-conscious.*

But, first,—What is consciousness?

*Even nothing, possibly, but what answers to the glitter of a diamond.* If not a substantive entity,—which, so far as I know, it was never once thought or even dreamt to be, but, rather of some such entity, somehow some

feature, as has always been the impression which has prevailed—then, we may think of it either as a functioning, merely, of some more or less absolute entity; or as a state of that entity; or as a property of it. A functioning of it, as the pulsations of the heart are a functioning of that organ; a state of it, as diamond is one physical state of the chemical element carbon of which plumbago is another; or a property of it, as hardness is a property of that same element; or, possibly, an accident of it, as the glitter of the diamond is an accident, and a fluctuating accident, of that, dependent on the presence of light, dependent as even having no being, indeed, but for that presence. We may think of it as any of these. But shall we not entertain it, with the greater probability, as either the first or the last? and, with the still greater reason, as the last rather than the first,—the last *and an accident answering to the glitter of a diamond?* The greater probability would seem to lie this way, since it, like the glitter of that form of carbon, is dependent on

something alien for its very being even, dependent on content for very being (so far as we know) as the glitter of the diamond is dependent on light for its being; is dependent on content,—sight, for example, or the special consciousness of external objects, being dependent for its very existence on the presence of those external objects; as, in the same way, indeed, is consciousness in general, at least primarily, dependent for its being at all—so it is commonly held—on the presence of the external world in general.

However, which of these several alternatives consciousness is, it is not necessary here to determine. Only—if it be accident and as glitter of diamond, as in any instance it might be itself its own content, then that content would be only doubly an accident.

And only, again, whichever it is, self-consciousness must be the same; that is, if consciousness be but an accident of an entity, then what is self-consciousness must itself, too, be such accident answering to the glit-

ter of a diamond; and, as thus answering, it, as well as consciousness again, like the glitter of a diamond, only something uncertain, evanescent, necessarily only local and not universal, precisely as accords with all experience as to both; and which to be said of both consciousness and self-consciousness, the same is, by implication, to be said of the I or ego they involved, and that it (the I or ego) too, is but local, fitful and temporary as are they.

But if not necessary here that is determined which of the alternatives in question consciousness is, what yet is here necessary is knowledge of something the relation of consciousness and content.

I have already said that that relation is one of dependence, the former on the latter at least as glitter of diamond on light. And so far as we know, this is the case. There must be content such as feeling, or percept, or concept; content which must be consciousness, itself, at least when it is nothing else than content; consciousness then vary-

ing, in a way, as content varies. In other words, we know consciousness only by content, which is to say, by its states; or, in still a little different phrasing, we know only states of consciousness, know nothing of it absolutely and as a part from its states, any more than we know anything of the glitter of carbon apart from the carbon's allotropic state of diamond.

But, still, though on the score just indicated they are inseparable, yet are they utterly distinct; as much so as are surface and solid, or as the lines forming an angle from an angle which they form—as solid or angle are to obtain, The surface is not the solid itself, nor the lines the angle itself; neither is consciousness nor content, either the other itself. The latter is, as it were, the thing thought utterly distinct from the former and what is to the effect of the thinker of the thing thought,—utterly distinct, equally whether consciousness is thinker, an independent entity though we cannot realize it, or whether only a function, accident or the like, of such thinker and entity.

Whether consciousness is entity of itself and thinker, we do not know. We may know of such a thing as capacity and capacity *for* consciousness; but we do not know of capacity of *what* for it. And for one reason among others, that the *what*, whatever it is, never—as we earlier had occasion to make evident even to a demonstration—comes to the surface in self-consciousness, of which it is infinitely incapable; never comes to the surface in self-consciousness and as I or ego—*never*.

What is capacity may involve, as the best we can understand, positive entity and thinker, and, yet, such, as behind thinking or thought, is purely and only an idea of something as behind that we have, as it is purely and only an idea, that we have, of an impressor as of an outward world behind impressions; it is not anything, in either case, of which we have positive knowledge. It is nothing we can have direct knowledge of through self-consciousness—as I have a said and said again and again—or otherwise.



It no more follows in the one case that there is, indeed, a thinker than in the other that there is an impressor,—but it as much follows. I say, with no more absolute knowledge do we get behind thinking or thought than we get behind impressions. We can do so in either case only as knowing, as there is anything behind, what such thing is *not*—nothing positive what it *is*.

However, be all this as it may, consciousness and content are not in the least, under any circumstances to be confounded. They are things diverse altogether in that, while the former must be understood, of course, in a way as itself conscious, as itself shining of its own light, the latter, on the contrary, must be positively recognized as not itself conscious at all; or, if shining or appearing to shine, recognized that it does so not of its own but of a borrowed light. Content must, I say, be positively entertained as that having no consciousness of its own, but which, still, if possibly, seeming at any time such to have, to thus seem to have it, only in virtue of relations with something else

which as having consciousness of its own, gives to what has none of its own, the appearance of having such of its own.

**CONSCIOUSNESS NOT SELF-CONSCIOUS.**



## CONSCIOUSNESS NOT SELF-CONSCIOUS.

### THEOREM 2.

*Continued.*)

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But now then, theorem second, aforesaid,  
*That the self-consciousness of consciousness is impossible.*

I am conscious of a brick,—is the brick conscious?—or more, the brick as content of my consciousness? No more, any other thing as that content; no more, as I have now to say, even as it might be consciousness itself—itsself as it would seem—its own content. That, come to be a content of itself is another thing—*it is no longer consciousness*. It is then a matter of reflection and becomes object; and as object what was a live thing becomes a dead one. It becomes an image only. As an image, it is not consciousness itself; at such moment it is not itself.

To state it a little differently—a thing as object—object as representatively object—is

never seen for such as it is in itself. Or, to put it the other way about, what is a thing such as it is in itself, is, as seen as object, never seen. And the simple fact of consciousness having become object, bars it at once from being recognized for such as it is in itself, which is something conscious. As such as it is in itself as something conscious, it, as such as it is *not* in itself, would be what is *not* conscious. I say consciousness itself—itself as it would seem—as content occupying consciousness is no more that content conscious than is the brick aforesaid, as content occupying it, conscious. Why, can a man hold himself in his own lap, pray? No more can consciousness hold itself in its own lap. But what the man *can* do is to hold a *picture* of himself in his own lap (but, as we will find later, he *does not*, in the mental attitude of self-consciousness, do even that, but holds only a picture of *someone else* or thing as “himself” in his lap.)

He can hold a *picture* of himself in his own lap, and that is all consciousness itself can do. But is that picture, itself, of the man a

living thing and conscious as is the man? No more is what is only the picture of consciousness, as the latter affects to hold itself in its own lap, conscious. And if not conscious, then it cannot be self-conscious,—and there can be no such thing as the self-consciousness of consciousness. *That can be no self-consciousness of consciousness which is but a consciousness of a self itself not conscious.*

So, I repeat that no more than can a man hold himself in his own lap, can consciousness hold itself in its own; and that it cannot, is fatal to the self-consciousness of consciousness, as it is to the latter itself itself as the content of itself.

That what the man holds in his own lap, or consciousness in its, is, at most, but a picture,—that what, in other words, the “himself” or “itself” in the mental attitude of self-consciousness, with consciousness itself—as it affects to be—its own content, is but a pure abstraction, a concept of a sort, simply a creature of the imagination, may be afforded confirmation variously. And in one way, the following.

Be it noticed that, that consciousness, so far as we know, obtains only with content *is as true of it, it itself the content of itself, as of it as that of which itself is the content.*

Now, the closest introspection by any one accustomed to that sort of thing will fail to realize any content, whatsoever, to the consciousness—consciousness as it effects to be—itself the content<sup>of</sup> consciousness. This of itself should make it only self-evident that such content is not the genuine article at all; rather that it is but a counterfeit presentment; or at least that we are wholly without warrant for any contrary inference. And make it only self-evident, again, that the “himself” or “itself” involved is only a dream, a conjuration of the mind; not an independent entity, entity the “conscious self,” or any other.

The one only conclusion to come to in all this is that consciousness is at an infinite remove from possibility of self-consciousness—that it is only an *idea* of it that upon reflection we have of it, and to which content is



not necessary ; and that it is, of course, moreover at an infinite remove from identification with I or ego, identification with which could obtain only in the event of its self-consciousness.



NOTHING IS SELF-CONSCIOUS.



## NOTHING IS SELF-CONSCIOUS.

---

But now, then, if not anything back of consciousness, nor, yet, even that itself and as itself its own content, can be self-conscious, what conceivable is there left, as what might be, but some possible content other than the latter itself, that content? Nothing.

But what are we to expect of any other which has not even the appearance of being conscious, let alone being so in reality, which appearance, at least consciousness, itself its own content, has? Why, manifestly, with the greater reason, the same fate of consciousness itself, its own content. And what, then, *can* be self-conscious? NOTHING! And is, indeed, the subjective world, much like the objective—all illusion? I answer—YES!—at least the one as much as the other.

And, pray, why not the one as much as the other? Is it the assumption that we see subjectively without faculties? It is *but* assumption. But, if half our faculties in their primary and direct deliverance miscarry, why not the other half? Why, in all reason, assume the contrary? What could be more utterly illogical than to assume one half of them to deliver falsely, and yet not to assume the other half to ?—to suppose not a few, in effect, downright liars, and, yet, that the as many remaining, are only scrupulously truthful? And is, indeed, not the primary and direct deliverance of the half we distinguish as the senses a flat contradiction of the facts?

Does the sun veritably rise and set? Is the green in the grass where we see it? Does the moon shine of its own light? Is visual light an outlying independent objective entity as appears?—and so on to the end of the endless list.

But if primary and direct deliverance delivers nothing without for such as it is in itself, what it is but—shall I say—down-

right idiocy to suppose such deliverance delivers otherwise within? But if the situation is in the one case as in the other, then the illusion in matters of the world within is as complete as it is in the world without. Then why not be logically consistent about it and admit the fact to whatever perdition it carries us?

The fact of it is, as would appear, that it is the secondary or indirect deliverance that in good degree or altogether is to be relied on to bring us as near to final truth as our minds, for their nature, will admit. It is the indirect deliverance that informs us that it is the revolution of the earth upon its axis that gives to the sun the appearance of rising and setting; that the moon shines by reflected light; that visual light is a creation of the eye and mind, and not an outlying independent objective entity; and so on.





SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS ONLY AN AP-  
PEARANCE LIKE THE SUN'S RISING;  
IT IS EVEN CONSCIOUSNESS NOT OF  
ONE'S SELF BUT OF SOMEBODY ELSE  
OR THING.



SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS ONLY AN  
APPEARANCE.

THEOREM 3.

---

But now a third theorem, namely,—*That the self-consciousness the experience of everyone, is consciousness, not of one's self, but of somebody else or thing.*

I have said that logically at least, a thing to be self-conscious must first be, itself, conscious; that the only thing we absolutely know to be conscious is consciousness itself; that even that could not be self-conscious unless a man could hold himself in his own lap; that as he cannot, then there can be no self-consciousness of consciousness, and as not of anything not conscious, then not of anything whatsoever. And, yet, that has been demonstrated all this, there is, in consciousness as is everyone's experience, as is not to be denied, what passes for self-

consciousness a reality. It must, then, be a deliverance of what is only an *appearance* of such. There is no possible alternative. And what is that appearance, in other words? Why, it is the conscious self or thinker thinking the thinker is conscious of the thinker when the thinker is not. Stated more loosely—it is the thinker thinking he is conscious of himself when he is not. True enough, he is, indeed, conscious of such a thing as self, and of consciousness of that self, and of that self he is thinking of as the thinker conscious of that self. But that is the whole of it; that self he is thinking of *is not the thinker who or which is thinking of that self, at all*. That self must be the self of someone else or thing; for the thinker, as must be plain enough to everyone, cannot possibly be thinking he is thinking of himself, when he is not, but as he is thinking of someone *else* or thing *as* himself. And it is the self of *that someone else or thing* that is the self he is thinking of as the thinker thinking of that self, and which, in fact, does not even think at all. It is *that* self,

and which he *has* to be thinking of as he is thinking he is thinking of himself when he is not.

So that as is admitted, as we have found it has to be, that self-consciousness can be only an appearance, and as, consequently, the thinker cannot be thinking of himself when he thinks he is, it therefore would appear rather something self-evident than something more formally to be demonstrated that self-consciousness such as is the common experience, is the consciousness not of one's self but of somebody else or thing.

As this is what it is, however, the thinker is the victim of a double illusion and delusion: first, in being of the mind that he is conscious of himself when he is not, and second, in being, negatively at least, of the mind that he is not conscious of somebody else or thing when he is. To make further evident *how* he is this victim, let us see by an illustration *how* it comes to pass; as also *how* what is only an appearance of self-consciousness obtains.

It is all inconceivable but as obtaining

only in one way; and that is as the conscious self loses itself in the some content of its own consciousness which content it mistakes for itself. In other words, *it is as the thinker loses himself in his own some thought or idea which, or the subject-matter of which, he mistakes for himself, and does so only because lost in it.* And this, as being the only one order of experience conceivable in which such self-consciousness can obtain, it is only gross outrage of all rules of legitimate inference if it be not recognized as of the order in fact in which it obtains.

But to illustrate, as I have said. So now, here, say, is Macready having assumed the theatrical part of King John and lost in it. As *lost* in it, he is not conscious of, knows nothing of, Macready, who is as utterly alien to him as is Sam Jones or John Smith. He is, himself, to himself, King John conscious and self-conscious—nothing more. Suppose, now, I say to you, the reader,—“Macready is not conscious of himself, but of himself as King John.” If you are quick, you will at once reply,—

“But he has to be conscious of himself to be conscious of himself as King John.” And, still, Macready is *not* conscious of Macready; and so not conscious of himself.

Here would seem paradox enough, indeed. But the situation is this: Macready has now the experience of what passes for self-consciousness—precisely as when he was himself. And, yet, he has no consciousness of Macready and, so, none of any “*himself*” as Macready. What is the “self” or “himself” in his present condition is King John. In his consciousness, self-consciousness is simply King John conscious of King John—the “self” or “himself” in his mind being the king. There is no Macready in it anywhere in Macready’s consciousness. There is in his consciousness, consciousness of Macready’s *thinking*, but not of the thinking as *Macready’s*. So that, Macready does *not* have to be conscious of himself (Macready), to be conscious of himself as King John; for the only self or himself in his consciousness all the while is that of the King. And the paradox is not so much of a one after all.

But this is not all, for it is all to say that Macready as he experiences "self-consciousness" is conscious *not* of Macready *but of somebody else and only somebody else, namely, the king, again*—which is exactly the point I was to demonstrate.

And we have only to suppose the situation to be precisely the same as the thinker might be unknown, and the offspring of the imagination of that unknown thinker whom or which offspring he (or it) mistakes to be himself to be, instead of King John, some veritable John Smith as we know him to be, (or, perhaps some professor of metaphysics in one of our universaties),—we have only to suppose the situation precisely the same, to have a perfect understanding of how, what we know of a logical certainty is only an appearance of self-consciousness, obtains in John Smith's mind—John Smith's as it would appear; and, of course, how obtains what is such in general.

This is the one only way conceivable. And it is due to ourselves, as we would not live in a delusion as well as in an illusion,



that we recognize without evasion or delay that there *has* to be a way to what we *have* to recognize, as I have demonstrated to a certainty, is only a fictitious self-consciousness anyway that is the experience of anyone. As the one only way, that just indicated completely covers the case. And as it does, and is the only one conceivable, it is only consistent with the rigorous requirements of sound reasoning that it be recognized as *the* way, the way even as demonstrated—at least until, perchance, as it should seem impossible, some other shall come to the surface to be found more plausible. That is to say, is only consistent with sound reasoning that it be received as demonstrated that self-consciousness such as is the experience of everyone is the consciousness of someone else or thing, and not of one's self, at all. It is the consciousness by the thinker of *some John Smith* of a sort and not of *himself at all*.

But it is a way as carries with it, as will not fail to be understood, not only that, in the experience which passes for self-con-

sciousness, there is no self in it an entity conscious and self-conscious and that entity the thinker, but that there is no entity at all anyway in it; and, even worse than this, no self as standing for, or referring to any; and that, if it stands for or refers to anything whatever beyond itself, it is only to something of the order of a mental abstraction, again, such as is itself.

And, yet, as all this is so, then since it is all right the contrary of the direct delivery of itself in consciousness as that delivery is universally recognized,—as this is all so, I say, it, the self, is not a thing on its face such as it is in itself.

But as a thing on its face not such as it is in itself, it is an illusion ; and so wide is it of appearing in its true character, so altogether right the contrary of that that it is, in truth, illusion of the deepest dye—a positive fraud, indeed; and, of course, the any I or ego as referring to it illusion of the deepest dye and a positive fraud along with it.

WHAT PASSES FOR SELF-CONSCIOUS-  
NESS IS AN EXPERIENCE OF AN  
IDEA ONLY OF IT, NOT OF SELF-  
CONSCIOUSNESS ITSELF.



## SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS ONLY AN IDEA.

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But now the demonstration to this point has been more a direct and positive one of what self-consciousness and the self involved are not, and only incidentally what they are; in other words, only in good part an indirect and negative one of what they positively are as demonstrating directly and positively what they were not was indirectly and negatively demonstrating what as the only alternative they must be.

In what follows, I am rather to reverse all this, and directly and positively make incontrovertible what they are, while only indirectly and negatively proving what they are not.

In still other words, it is to put beyond controversy that self-consciousness is only an *idea*; an idea with which the thinker is exercised, an *idea* of an experience in consciousness rather than the experience itself which he has.

That the distinction I am making may be clearly understood, let me, as it were, call to the stand Macready lost in the idea of being King John.

“Macready, where did you say you were going?” “Macready!—that’s not I,—Who’s Macready? I am King John.” “Then you are King John, are you?” “Certainly.” “Then, if you are at any time self-conscious as you think, it is King John conscious of King John?” “Why, yes; who else could it be consciousness of?” Then in your mind, your self-consciousness is consciousness of the king.” “Why, of course”

Here Macready’s whole experience of self-consciousness is an *idea* of King John’s being self-conscious. He has no consciousness of Macready, and so, of course, no experience of Macready’s being self-conscious. And this is what I mean by having only an idea of self-consciousness as contrasted with an experience of it itself, as would be Macready conscious of Macready.

Need I insist that to have the former is not to have the latter? To have an idea

simply of going to the moon is not to go. Who should say they were one and the same thing would be a little moony or lunny himself. And so, who should say that to have an idea of being self-conscious is one and the same with being so would be a little moony or lunny too, and a fit subject for an insand asylum, even tho it should be one of the professors in the chair of metaphysics or psychology of our greatest university who should say it ; and he should be committed forthwith.

But it is the same as the thinker is not Macready, and is even an unknown thinker and one passing in cog. as in the present pilgrimage into metaphysics; and as, also, the sport of the imagination, is not a deceased king but a living embodiment of what is in the mind of the thinker, like some acquaintance of ours, say, John Smith, again.

But the truth of the proposition that it is only an idea of self-consciousness with which the thinker (or the minds of men) is exercised will receive ample warrant for its recognition as is demonstrated a fourth and

final theorem, which itself could be demonstrated only as the above at the same time was, and which I am immediately coming to. This latter, tho the last, might well have been my first theorem, as it is little more, in the main, than what in their ensemble are those preceding—save as would be implied as their demonstration was more an indirect and negative one of what the demonstration of this last is rather such as is direct and positive, and with the incidental result of the confirmation of those going before; is rather such as is direct and positive and is so by demonstrating specifically what the idea in ultimate or genuine form is in which the thinker is lost that it, or the subject matter of it, should be delivered in consciousness as itself conscious and self-conscious when it is neither.

I say that in making plain the truth of this final proposition, will be made more evident and only too evident to be disputed, that self-consciousness is only an idea of an experience, and not the experience itself; only an idea, and, yet, be it noted, with an



experience in consciousness just as real as the genuine article to the thinker who or which masquerades as you or I; just as real as were it very self-consciousness itself. The same as was just as real to Macready, as were it veritably Macready conscious of Macready, his consciousness of King John as conscious of King John.



THE I OR EGO AND AS CONSCIOUS AND  
SELF-CONSCIOUS ONLY AN IDEA AND  
NOT WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT EN-  
TITY ITSELF CONSCIOUS AND SELF-  
CONSCIOUS.

IN SHORT, WE OURSELVES ONLY AN  
IDEA, AND AS ONLY AN IDEA, WE  
OURSELVES NEITHER SELF-CON-  
SCIOUS NOR EVEN CONSCIOUS.



## WE OURSELVES ONLY AN IDEA.

### THEOREM 4.

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But that final theorem—it is this, namely, *that the I or ego is but an idea, an idea actualized, and a phenomenon; that it is not, itself, a conscious or self-conscious existence at all, but only that of which that, that has, itself, conscious existence has consciousness, the I or ego being conscious of nothing; that, as still posing as such existence, it is, in effect at least, an interloper and impostor.*

I mean to say that I myself am not conscious, much as I may think I am; that you are not; that that we are, and are self-conscious is an illusion; and very a delusion as widespread as is the illusion. This is not to say that there is not consciousness, not self-consciousness of a sort; but that <sup>it</sup> is not I, that it is not you, that are either conscious or self-conscious.

Now, the I or ego, as will not be disputed, could not obtain but as what is supposed to

be self-consciousness obtained. Nor disputed, again, that, as the latter did obtain, the any I or ego, as obtaining, referred to the self involved and was practically the self over again recognized under an alias of term. Again, as is by no one doubted, what is supposed to be self-consciousness could not obtain but as critical with the moment of that mental experience is the recognition of *something* as object—object as object.

Now, then, that *only* something which it could possibly be would be what is the *only correlative* of object as object, namely, subject as subject. And, yet, this is not what is delivered in consciousness as that that seen in the moment of self-consciousness, is seen as object. What is so delivered as object is self, self understood as thinker. Unless, then, subject and thinker are one and the same, subject must be in disguise.

But what is subject? Why, a concept, an idea, something thought—not a thing which thinks as is the thinker. It is but an idea, an idea of something a stand-off and distinct from something else, the latter, the

stood-off-from being recognized as object. I say subject is but an idea, and an idea as of something a mere stand-off to something else, stand-offness being the very quintessence of subject, the very quintessence of the subjectness of subject, It is but an idea and this one, and one which easily lending itself to being thought in active and positive assertion of itself, would in any deliverance such as *I am*, be understood as subject asserting its stand-offness and distinctness from object; the I (or ego) asserting distinctness from the not-I,—the I in solemn and earnest protestation that itself was *not* the not-I and *was* something apart from it. Subject is but this idea, I repeat, and one as in which the thinker might be *lost*, one which must *inevitably* be *felt* to be thus in this assertion of itself, and the thinker himself in assertion of its assertion, and the subject realized as conscious and self-conscious in the assertion as was the thinker himself conscious and self-conscious; the same as Macready, lost in the idea of being King John, felt as was supposed did

the king, and whom was felt to be conscious and self-conscious as was Macready himself.

The subject, I again affirm, is just this idea, and as an idea and something thought, something necessarily dependent for its being, while the thinker is at least conceivable as independent; something necessarily dependent and on two things—on the thinker to think it, and on object—either of which absent and it itself is absent, it itself does not in the least obtain. Subject is but an idea, shall I emphasize once more, something thought, and not something like thinker which thinks. And as something thought and only something thought something utterly distinct from thinker which thinks as surely as there is such thinker; as utterly, as infinitely, distinct as watch from watchmaker, or as is King John of Macready's imagining from Macready himself.

Of course, as I have said early in this writing, we do not know with absolute knowledge that there is a thinker behind thinking, any more than that there is an outlying objective world behind impressions. But



at least it is inconceivable by the human mind that there should not be. Thinking we do absolutely know there is; but that that thinking is itself its own thinker, that thinking is thinker thinking, or that thought is itself thinker thinking, is quite a little too much for our minds to grasp. It is as inconceivable by us as acting without an actor, or motion without a thing in motion. And, indeed, I may say that it is universally recognized that for all purposes of intelligent thought at least, thinker as distinct from thinking or thought is to be understood. So I repeat, that as there is thinker distinct from thought, subject is a matter of thought and so not the thinker but utterly distinct from the same.

That the contrary has the authority of all the ages and of all the most eminent minds of those ages makes it so much the worse for those ages and those eminent minds and not for the truth as I am maintaining it.

That subject is not the thinker that is seen as supposed in the critical moment of self-consciousness is what I have been contend-

ing all along in the preceding pages; and so by implication contending that thinker is not one and the same with it which *is* what is seen or, at least, looked at if not seen, in that critical moment.

But that thinker is utterly distinct from subject and, incidentally, that the former is not self-conscious may be demonstrated by an approach of the matter on entirely another tack. And thus: Object as object is what as appears. If what as appears is something of human—call it human for convenience—creation or imagination, then what as appears is such as it is in itself; but if not of human creation or imagination, then what as appears is not such as it is in itself. A brick is something of human origin. A brick, then, as what as appears, is such as it is in itself—a brick. But the substance of the brick is not of human origin; so that what as appears and is, as we recognize it, matter, is not such as it is in itself.

Now *something* confessedly is seen as object in the moment of self-consciousness. As seen as object, it is what as appears. If

what as, at that critical moment appears, is something of human origination, then it is such as it is in itself. If, on the contrary, not something springing of that source, then what as appears is not such as it is in itself. But what as appears in the moment of self-consciousness is as seen, as universally admitted, *the thinker as self seen*. But is the thinker something of human origin? If not, then what as appears as seen, or at least looked at, in that critical moment is *not* such as it is in itself, and the *thinker as self* as what as appears is *not* what obtains such as it is in itself—that is, it is *not the thinker*, that is the self.

But what, then, *must* it be which, at that critical moment, is so seen or at least looked at? Why, must be what is the only correlative of object, which is subject, and which *is* of human or the thinker's creation, and which understood as self and as what as appears *is* the self such as it is in itself as we should expect as it was of the above derivation.

Subject and thinker, then, are not one and the same as here positively demonstra-

ted; for one could not possibly be seen or looked at in the critical moment of consciousness but as the other was if the two were one and the same. But they are, indeed, no more one and the same than are watch and watchmaker; they are *infinitely* distinct, at least if so be thought and thinker.

Subject as something thought and only something thought, is not, then, something itself conscious and self-conscious. Such a thing as the conscious subject is an absurdity. There is no such thing. Those who talk such metaphysical jargon seem to be under something the impression that subject is one thing and subject as subject quite another; and that the former is one with the the thinker, and the latter perhaps not. But there is no difference and no distinction whatever. When metaphysical subject is not subject as subject, there is no subject at all—it has no being. As not the latter, it is not subject at all—only *thing*. On the least remove from thing, as it is subject at all, it is subject as subject; there is no half-way station at which it is the former and not the

latter. Conscious subject, in fact, is not only a contradiction and an absurdity but something positively ridiculous, no matter how time-honored and eminent the authority behind it.

But you say, there is the thought object, and why is there not, must there not be the thinking subject? Well, simply because there is no must about it—and there is none such whatever. What precisely there is is this: There is the *thought* subject as well as the thought object; and the *thought* subject *thought* conscious and self-conscious. In other words, there is the thinker *thinking* the subject, as I have just pointed out, and then *thinking* that *thought* subject conscious and self-consciousness; exactly as Macready lost in the idea of himself as King John, thinks, first, in logical order, the king of his imagination and, then, *thinks* that creature of his thought conscious and even self-conscious as he *must* as beside himself thinking himself that creature.

So that while there is the thought object, there is at the same time, as I said a moment

ago, the *thought* subject *thought* conscious; but no conscious subject itself at all. It is the thought subject thought conscious that is the correlate of the thought object.

The thinker can not *be* the thing he imagines; he can only *imagine* his being that thing; and what only he can do he does do, and only does by losing himself in what he imagines. By thus losing himself, he is not *being* what he imagines. As he loses himself in the idea of being my neighbor, John Smith, is he John Smith himself?—and is there two John Smiths and no Macready?

The situation, then, is the thinker thinking the idea of subject, the subject as asserting itself and conscious and self-conscious and lost in that idea, wherefore subject(self) and its tender of I or ego should *appear* in the thinker's consciousness conscious and self-conscious.

And now, why, indeed, might not—even were it not demonstrable, as I have assumed it to be, and even assumed it being positively demonstrated in these pages.—Why might not the thinker think a thought, as it were



a theatrical part, think the idea of subject as subject that part, and in thinking it be lost in it?—which, as he might be, it would be with the difference between thinker and actor, only this, that the former in once thinking the part of the idea of subject as subject and I or ego, and being lost in it, never comes directly (only indirectly by reasoning about it as I now do) to recognize that he had been lost in his thought or idea of his own thinking, while the actor does. The actor does come to himself, in time, to recognize, and directly, that it was but a histrionic role and character he was assuming, and in which, for the time being, he had been lost. But does any one know any reason why the thinker, universal among men, might not be lost in his (or its) own some certain thought, and never come to himself (or itself) directly to know himself as having been thus lost in his own thought or idea?—know why, once lost in the some such idea as subject as subject, he must not *not* ever come to himself directly and know himself directly and know himself as having

been lost in that idea?—not ever, at least, until this life is over?

Or, why, moreover, should not the thinker so lost, be, still, something as utterly as ever distinct from the thought, distinct from subject as subject and from the I or ego which, as referring to the subject is practically subject itself?—why not as distinct and no more one and the same with subject than is the actor, lost in the part he is acting, one and the same with the part,—than is Macready, interpreting the part of the king and lost in it, one and the same as the king? When Macready in the part of the king and lost in it exclaims, I am murdered,—is it Macready that so exclaims of *himself*—or as the king dies is it *Macready* who is dead? And not more, when the thinker in thinking the thought of subject as subject and lost in it exclaims, *I am conscious*, it is the *thinker* which thinks and says *as of itself*, (or himself) I—I—am conscious. Neither more, again would it be, or, at least, need it be, the thinker dead, as died the subject and I or ego; not more, at least need it be, even yet that,



as the former died, must die the latter.

The *thinker* in it all, is as I have insisted time and again, never once *self-conscious*—conscious of *himself*, never once directly conscious at all of *what is he, himself*, but only conscious ever of what he, himself, is *not*: he is *only* ever conscious of the *subject* which is *not he, himself*. Indeed, in what I myself and you yourself, affect to know of ourselves as ourselves, the thinker in such-wise knows nothing of himself (or itself); nor we, ourselves, of the thinker: any more than Macready, lost in the histrionic part of the king, knows anything of Macready whom, if brought to reason about, it would be, in his consciousness, *as about an altogether other and alien person* like, as it were, Sam Jones or John Smith. He has no consciousness of *himself*, he has only an *idea* of something, namely, *subject* and *I or ego* as being conscious of *itself*; and, being lost in the idea, he does not know it as only an idea; and, to him, it is *subject and I or ego just as really conscious and self-conscious*, as to Macready, lost in the idea of being King John, it is King

John of his imagining conscious and self-conscious.

And, still, you could no more beat it out of the direct deliverance in consciousness of any human mind, that subject and I or ego which is to say, what the man understands by "himself," is not the thinker, is not that which is conscious and seemingly self-conscious still that it is only something *of* which something or somebody is conscious, than you could beat it out of Macready, lost in role of King John, that that King John of his imagination was not the thinker in the case and which was conscious and self-conscious—self-conscious as it would seem—rather than Macready.

Of course, it will be said that, still, the thinking, in the case of King John, is Macready's thinking, is the thinker's thinking. But *what* is Macready's or the thinker's thinking is not, *itself Macready himself*, or the *thinker himself*, thinking; and the *self* is something of *what* is their thinking. It is, therefore, nothing itself conscious; as not conscious, it cannot be self-conscious.

So that to say that the thinking is Macready's or the thinker's does not help the matter at all as to its being King John or subject and I or ego they themselves conscious and self-conscious and thinking.

I have now directly and positively demonstrated that the something which, in the critical moment of consciousness, as object is recognized as self, *must*, as it might be as *thing itself* recognized—and not thing as object—which is to say as it might be subject, which is the only correlative of object, which was recognized—be something not the thinker as by self was to be understood the thinker. Or, I have directly and positively demonstrated, what is to the same effect, that the self, as also the I or ego which is only something as referring to self and subject, is an idea, that of subject as subject; subject a something a mere standoff to something with which it is correlated, of object; that, as an idea, it is something thought and not something thinking or thinker which is something as wide as the poles asunder from it; that, as only an idea and something

thought, it is neither conscious nor self-conscious; that yet it should appear to be even both is explicable only as is understood the thinker to be lost in his own idea of subject, subject as self and I or ego, when that the self and I or ego should *appear* as conscious and self-conscious, would be *inevitable*; that as not conscious nor self-conscious, it is to the effect that you the reader and I the writer are neither conscious nor self-conscious, much as we may fancy that we are; and that the I or ego, which is to say that we, are so is an illusion, and the I or ego itself, in effect at least, an interloper and impostor and a colossal one,—all of which is as I set out in the beginning to prove.

Moreover, not only have we found the self and I or ego to be not the thinker, and not something conscious and self-conscious, not only found them, in short, only an idea but an idea the most gossamerish, the most volatile and shifting in tenure, it were possible to imagine.

Think of it!—the self and I or ego of self-consciousness, that is, you and I but a some-

thing a mere stand-off, a mere assertion of stand-off-ness from something else! Could anything more insubstantial be conceived? And, in fact, if ever there was a thing the most shadowy of the shadowy, a mere fleck of foam on the crest of the wave, a sheer bubble of pretensions and fitful and fluttering existence, it is this thing of a very upstart of the self and I or ego of what passes for the self-consciousness of the thinker. All the world's greatest thought and greatest accomplishment is wrought with it off the stage completely. As every one understands, as whoever intellectually is profoundly and earnestly occupied with any matter, he loses all consciousness of self and the I or ego. And it is the same in all abandon to great physical exertion. The self (the self of self-consciousness) and I or ego are (is) at such moments, not merely submerged or in abeyance, for the time being,—as might be supposed was the case as they referred to the thinker,—not merely in retreat within the wings of the stage, so to speak, but they are absolutely non est. The self, and of course,

by implication, the I or ego which is only something as referring to it, has actually no more existence at such time than have subject itself, with which it is identified, and its correlate of object, in the absence of a thinker.

And yet this thing and degenerate of self and I or ego of self-consciousness when it is on the stage,—and it is there no little of the time,—takes up the whole of it, and poses and struts as were itself the whole thing and did everything—the whole thing and did everything, still that it is itself scarcely anything and accomplishes, it itself, nothing!

The truth is, that self-consciousness as such, conscious of self as self, would seem to be a sort of lapse, aberration or degeneracy of consciousness instead of the very acme of its normal culmination as we are prone to think it, and flatter ourselves in thinking it. Flatter ourselves,—and, yet, with what reason, when we contemplate for a moment the wonders that even vegetable life alone works in the absence, as we have only reason

to suppose, of all consciousness of self as self,—wonders, beside which the many achievements of man, wonderful as they are, are as nothing in the comparison; and which the very self-consciousness of man, indeed, would seem even to operate in contravention of his working. Rather, would what is only consciousness seem the higher and highest consciousness. Rather, I say, would almost seem the consciousness of the oyster higher than any that distinctive of man.

Anyway much the stage or form of it of the above would appear to be that which alone is enduring and eternal, as any is so; while the stage or form recognized as consciousness of self as self would seem something only ephemeral in the extreme, as ephemeral as any other phenomenon, only which—a phenomenon—is consciousness of self as self: only which—a phenomenon—which is to say, only that which is an idea actualized and the result of reaction with environment, as is anything, as it is such, but a phenomenon. Only a phenomenon,—and thus what, in fact, is self-conscious-



ness as what, also, is the I or ego, namely but a bubble upon the surface which bursts permanently with the death of the body, or soon after, as the caterpillar is but a thing of the moment which passes with the condition of the chrysalis, or soon after even yet that continuing for a little as the butterfly, even, again, as may we ourselves continue for a little after this life is passed. Possibly the thinker himself (or itself) may survive the death of the body still that the I or ego should not. But, if the thinker does, then it is, as it were, the actor come to himself—only with this difference that the actor in fact recalls that he has been acting and the part that he has been acting while the thinker does not—or does so but fitfully at the most. Rather the latter, is like the somnambulist who, still that he on waking comes to himself, has no recollection of his somnambule consciousness or the part, as it were, he has been acting.



THE  
PARALLEL OF THE WORLD WITHIN  
AND THE WORLD WITHOUT.



## THE WORLD WITHIN LIKE THAT WITHOUT.

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Before bringing the theme in the main, in hand, to a close, it seems, in view of all this which has been dwelt upon of the nature of the self (and its tender of I or ego) of self-consciousness as the one content of consciousness, an exception, as seeming to be itself conscious still that not so, among an almost infinity of contents which do not even seem to be—it seems, in view of it all, worthy of remark the something like a parallel of the world within to the world without.

Thus the numberless objects of the external world, for the most part, seem immersed in and seen, not by a light of their own, but by the light of the sun. So do the infinitely multifarious contents of the consciousness as of the internal world, in the main, seem thus immersed in and seen, not by a con-

sciousness of their own but by an alien consciousness that of some entity which we can no better understand than as thinker.

But in the physical universe, again, there is one exception to this rule of an object conspicuous and with which we are familiar far above every other and which is the glory of the night, namely, the moon, that appears of itself to shine, and yet does not but only of a reflected light. And so, too, once more in the mental or psychological universe is one exception to a similar rule of an object not only conspicuous and with which we are familiar far above every other, but most obtrusively so, and even to a degree and sometimes most offensively so and, in the minds of not a few so-called good people, most harmfully, and that one exception is the abstraction of the self of self-consciousness which seems to be conscious yet that it is not.

The self is, indeed, we may say, the moon of the inward and altogether mental universe.

Then, again still, in the history of men's

convictions as to the two moons, there runs something the same parallel. The vast majority of the human race even to-day are victims both of the illusion and of the delusion that the moon of the physical universe shines of its own light; and, doubtless, for long ages of mankind upon the globe, not a human being but supposed it did. So, on the other hand, even to-day and even, too, practically everybody the world over, our professors of metaphysics and psychology of our universities with the rest, labor under a like psychological aberration of comprehension and to the effect that the moon, as it were, of the psychological world is conscious of its own consciousness, that is, that what is only an appearance of the self and I or ego conscious and self-conscious is reality. They are, one and all, as innocent of any suspicion that what is appearance in the matter is only appearance as is any Fiji islander that the moon of his physical heavens does not shine of its own light. And they one and all, too, doubtless, will be given over to all, every whit, the asinine incredulity and scoff-

ing as to their pet and private moon which those savages might be supposed to give way to as to the more public one of their familiarity and ours as any question was raised among them as to that's shining of its own light.

But we will not forget that, all the same, it may be, after all, not any less a delusion in the one case than in the other.

OBJECTIONS; THE INSANITY OF MAN.





## THE INSANITY OF MAN.

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Before coming to the main matter of this chapter, let me note that, doubtless, even still, it will be insisted that, after all, *practically* at least, the I or ego is conscious; that, with Macready as the king, and lost in the part, it is, at least practically, the king conscious; and so, that with the thinker lost in the idea of the subject as subject and the I or ego, it is, at least practically, the subject and I or ego conscious and self-conscious. But wait: Suppose for illustration again—yet that it be in effect but to reiterate what has been already perhaps tediously dwelt on, that some John Smith were suddenly under the conviction that he was some one else, some noted person, was, say, some Prof. James of the nearby university, and should even invade the lecture room with the view to lecturing as very the professor himself, on psychology; would you say that the Prof.

James of John Smith's imagining was conscious? Would you not say, rather, that it was John Smith conscious of the *idea* of being Prof. James and *lost in that idea*, the while that it was John Smith himself, and *only* John Smith conscious, and nothing of any Prof. James of Smith's imagining, that was so? And, consistently with this, what else could be said than that it was the thinker conscious of the idea of subject as subject and I or ego and lost in that idea, the while, as above, that it was the thinker himself (or itself) and *only* the thinker, and *not* the subject and I or ego of his idea which was that which was conscious?

And even yet, after all, do you say that *practically* John Smith was Prof. James, and admit him to the university lecture room to lecture and pay him Prof. James' salary for the service rendered? This, in all consistency, you should do, if John Smith's *imagining* himself Prof. James is *practically* John Smith's being Prof. James; for this is only on a par with your saying that the thinker's *imagining* himself the I or ego and the I or

ego conscious is *practically* the I or ego conscious. Besides, what has become of the original Prof. James?—is he snuffed out of existence?—or is there two of him driving business at the same stand?

However, it is idle to deny that practically, true enough in a sense, the sun rises and sets; and that practically true enough in the same sense the I or ego, which is to say you and I, are conscious and self-conscious, still that, speaking with exact fidelity to the fact, neither is literally true. But here in this treatise it is altogether with what is literally true with which we have to deal and not with what is merely practically true, true whether one way or another.

But to say no more of this.

And now for the matter chiefly in hand in this chapter.

For another objection it will be said that John Smith lost in the idea of his being someone else is to the effect of John Smith insane, as Macready lost in the part of the king and never coming to himself to know he was

not the king, would be said to be insane; and thus, John Smith, in the situation, insane, is to the effect of the thinker insane, and even man himself, insane,—at least tainted with insanity as the creature of it,—if this be objected, then I ask—What of it? If it be urged that it is incredible enough that the I or ego is not, that I myself am not conscious, that, yet, as if to add to incredibility, it should, besides, be said that only as man is not conscious is he not insane; or, at least, be said that the whoever or whatever not me but back of me and doing thinking and business in my name is, himself or itself insane, then I ask again—What of it? I say what of it that, carried out to its logical conclusion, what I have been contending only brings up with much this proposition of the insanity of man, or, at least, of man the creature of insanity? What of it, I repeat, since, still, even then I would only be arguing in the set form of philosophy what Shakespeare ventures to exploit in the form of a drama, in the character of Hamlet? For, it would appear that that

greatest of poets and dramatists in the character and drama of Hamlet, meant not only no *individual* man especially, but *man*; but moreover, not man merely, but man a *composite of two beings, one sane and the other insane*, as a photograph may be a composite picture of two men of very different features.

In a word, Shakespeare in the character and drama of Hamlet meant to represent man as both sane and insane: and hence, of course, all the confusion of the interpreters and critics of the drama. And as the composite photograph produces more or less modified the features and peculiarities of each, so the composite dramatic character, character a composite of a sane man and an insane one, must exhibit what are, the more or less modified, still very the characteristics of the insane mind and conduct as well as of the sane; and exhibit what, indeed, in actual life would be met with only as veritable insanity itself, obtained back of all what were at least the symptoms of it.

If, then, the proposition of the I or ego as

not itself conscious brings up at last with that of man the offspring, at least, of insanity and tainted with it, if not, indeed, of altogether unsound mind, it only brings up with what has been ventured to assume in dramatic form by the greatest poet and dramatist that ever lived; and can command that endorsement if can no other.

As to the fact of man's insanity, doubtless Shakespeare did not, in his time, want in what he observed in men's thought and conduct, and no more does the present writer in his, for the most ample evidence of it; evidence which, if met with in only the *few* instead of the *mass* of mankind as it is, would be all-sufficient in the judgment of any reputable alienist to commit the subjects of it to an insane asylum forthwith. In other words, such few are only saved, this moment, from the madhouse in that their affliction is the affliction of all mankind.

When the head of a great nation with that great nation itself and even the church back of him, his accomplices in the crime, affects to murder *of right* fifty thousand even

Christian human beings guilty of no crime but of wanting their liberty, and all for gain as is only what (murder for gain) any highwayman or pirate does—is there no insanity in it? Or, when men of repute for extraordinary intellect and moral worth, perhaps of the measure of a Jonathan Edwards, can believe that a *beneficent and just* Deity could pave a hell with infants' skulls—is there nothing of insanity in mind that can but see those most contradictory things as hanging together? Then consider that a thousand volumes of a thousand pages each could be filled to overflowing with the like incongruous in the thought and conduct of men;—and, yet, no insanity in man—man as man?—!





SUMMARY WITH CLOSING COMMENT.



## SUMMARY WITH CLOSING COMMENT.

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We have found it may be said in final recapitulation to this effect;—That I myself, speaking of myself representatively, am not an entity as distinct from consciousness and back of it of which consciousness connotes some function, attribute or accident; that, then again, I am not even consciousness itself—be that an entity or what not,—nor even, strange to say, so much as conscious; that, rather, I am only an idea, that idea as actualized and made manifest, which is to say, made a phenomenon, made so as in the idea is lost the author of it,—the author of it which (or who) antedates the idea and is really that only which is conscious and the presumptive thinker; and that, therefore, in my still posing as shining by my own light, posing as conscious as of my own consciousness, or, as, indeed, conscious, myself at all, there is in effect, colossal imposture, and I, myself thus posing, the colossal, tho, perhaps,

unwitting impostor: found to this effect and, moreover, further found that the idea only which I myself am or to which refer is that of subject, subject as subject which, in fact, is nothing in or of itself, and something at all only as relative to something else that something else it, too, nothing in or of itself and something at all and object only as relative to subject; that the idea only which I am or to which refer is but this of subject and which as that is nothing in or of itself and something at all only as relative to something else, and an abstraction, so am I, too, necessarily, as being or referring to it (the subject), I, too, as is it, nothing in or of myself and something at all only as relative to something else, and an abstraction; and which, as I am, I am but the airiest of existences, but the airiest and of only the claim to the rank of an entity that either of the superficies of a plane has, either of which has no being but as the other has, or, for that matter, that has even the plane itself which is only the equivocal being of the superficies

themselves; am, I say, but this airiest, flimsiest, the most contingent and evanescent imaginable of existences, and nothing an absolute existence at all such as may the presumptive thinker and my *raison d'être* for being haply be; nothing such and nothing anything as could even affect to be an existence at all but as lost in me is this same thinker, lost in the conscious offspring the conscious parent.

In a word, we have found, in effect, that the I or ego, which is to say I myself, am only the unconscious guest of a conscious host, the unconscious guest masquerading in the livery, tho' all-unconsciously as in that livery, of the conscious host; and masquerading, indeed, even the host, the father, yet that all unconsciously the father, in the livery of the guest, the son—the son, yet that, again, all unconsciously the son as the father the father.

Of course, as I now may add, with whatever indisputable logic and clearness of exposition the matter of this dissertation is pre-

sented, it will, still, seem incredible to the common mind at least, as it will to others only in less measure, that anything whatsoever, should think itself conscious when it was not; that that only *of* which there was consciousness should still think itself as that as having consciousness on its own account; that the I or ego, which is to say that the reader himself, himself as he conceives himself, should be merely the result of thinking and an idea, rather than that which itself thinks and has, itself, ideas; that the thinker should be lost a whole life-long in one of his own ideas, never once coming to himself to know directly that he is so lost; that the son, yet that he is only the son, should still mistake himself for his own father—that he should do this and should pose in the livery of his father for three score years and ten, perhaps, never once knowing it as only the livery of his own father,—this will all, I say, at first at least, seem incredible.

But it must be remembered that every external object all unconsciously falls, primarily, on the retina of the physical eye, upside-

down; which, however, the mind as all-unconsciously corrects—doubtless thru experience—to rightside-up. And may it not be only what should be *expected* that matter the subject of our conception, or reflection, too, as above with matter of our perception, thus fall as all-unconsciously on a corresponding more interior retina as it were, of the mind, upside-down, and which, only reflection and an altogether advanced intelligence can, as does only experience in the case of perception, correct to rightside-up—only reflection and an altogether advanced intelligence, which, yet, has not hitherto, it must be allowed, obtained to correct?

At all events, what I have ventured to rank as a demonstration makes it certain that much this is the case.

One word more.

This may be the first time in the history of philosophy when was seriously attempted to show that the I or ego does not think, nor is even conscious,—to show that conviction to this effect is but illusion and delusion.

But there is a first time to everything as ever there is any time. Mankind has been on the planet some 100,000 years more or less, and only the day before yesterday, as it were, did even the more intelligent learn of the illusion of the sun's apparent rising and setting; while the vast multitude, even yet, are in the bondage not only of the illusion of it, but of the delusion of it, being still of the impression that what is only appearance is the literal fact. And it is as it were even only yesterday, indeed, that someone and few were rescued from the delusion—from the illusion of which none ever can be—that there is green in the grass, when unless modern science and philosophy are woefully at fault, there is none there at all; no visual green there at all, but only in the eye and mind which lodge it there; while the innumerable many, even yet, entertain not so much as a suspicion that it is not in the grass, itself, as appears. Indeed, the era of modern science and philosophy has barely come in before it is discovered that we are steeped to the eyes and ears and above them



in illusion and delusion; and that human progress threatens to consist more in working clear of the latter, if not of the former, than of anything else. It, therefore, should be nothing overmuch to be wondered at if, at last, we are to be made aware that that the I or ego is conscious, is covered in with the rest in the general misapprehension of the situation.

And, yet, the situation may be understood. As it is illusion, it is pardonable because in part, or altogether, unavoidable; but as it is delusion, it is simply ignorance and, save temporarily at best, without excuse.

Finally, it may be noted that precisely whoever or whatever may be the presumptive thinker to whom or which in the course of this writing reference has been made, it has not been in the mind of the writer at this time to divulge and exploit; it is enough now and here as has been shown that he or it is not the I or ego; that to nothing him or it does I or ego refer, but to the subject—subject in the consciousness as self—which is not at all the thinker.









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